

I am Brandie Petit, sister of Joseph Petit. I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit my statement about my brother. Joseph didn't have a lot as a child, but he wanted more. He wanted to be somebody. He wanted to make a difference. I remember Joseph sitting with me in his room, showing me the information he had about the Army. He told me "I want to be the best of the best" and therefore he wanted to be an Airborne Ranger. He believed he could make a difference. While growing up, Joseph was always very active and concerned about eating healthy and working out. At one time he had a 40-inch chest and looked a lot like Sylvester Stallone. He ran, weight lifted, drank raw eggs and protein shakes, and seemed to eat everything in sight. I can't ever recall Joseph taking any medications, even over the counter meds for something as minor as a headache. He worked very hard at everything he did. Once he put his mind to something, it would be done.

Joseph was determined to be an Airborne Ranger! But, he injured his knees while training to be the Airborne Ranger he desired to be. After seeking help for over 20 years from other options, it was a big step for Joseph to give up and finally go to the VAMC. My brother was able to care for himself and help others prior to going to the VA. He sought help for the pain in his knees. They treated his knees some, but the doctors said his pain was really just his brain making him believe there was pain and that there really wasn't any true pain or injury.

On Feb 27th of 2012, I took him to an appointment that the VA set up at QTC Medical Group in Atlanta GA. There he had to do several movements with his knees. I heard one of his knees pop, it sounded like a chicken bone snapping. The other one sounded like bone on bone grinding. Those noises gave me chills. If the pain in my brother's knees was imaginary, then please explain how I heard those noises. Why did my brother break his teeth gritting from the pain of trying to walk?

I am not sure of the exact date, but there was a day that Joseph spoke of, about him going to the VA and them not helping him. They told Joseph he needed to leave because he didn't have an appointment. The VA Police physically removed Joseph and put a standing order into place to arrest him if he showed up again without an appointment. This is NOT the way I feel anyone on earth should be removed or treated.

I am outraged at his treatment that day! I am very upset with the way Joseph and so many others are treated. My brother deserved more respect, if nothing else. If your job involves people, it doesn't matter how many credentials you have, **without compassion, credentials mean absolutely nothing!** The Bible states in the book of **Luke 6:27-36, love your enemies and treat others as you would have them treat you.** My brother treated everyone with respect!

Joseph was always more than willing to help family, friends, and even strangers in time of need. He truly cared about people and their comfort.

My mom and I were shown that same lack of respect when dealing with the VA after they found him dead. We didn't know where to go to pick up his belongings. I was driving and my mother was on the phone asking the VA Police where to go. Their reply was, "How did he die, was it suicide?" Now you tell me why they needed to ask my mother that? Just to rub it in her face that her only son had taken his own life? How rude! That's an example of how compassion should be more important than credentials! I do completely understand that credentials are essential, but we need to make sure that compassion is not forgotten when dealing with a person, a brother, a son, uncle, cousin, grandson, nephew, a friend, a soldier!

Joseph told me that if he did what they (the VA) said, they would fix his knees. He seemed to think if he played by their rules for a while, they would finally help! We have documents of every time he attempted to reach out for help and those documents prior to being treated by the VA will show that my brother was of sound mind!

Some questions I still have are: How many medications should someone take? Why in the world would one person have to take more than 20 pills a day? That's simply a ridiculous amount of medication going into one body. Many of his medications caused hallucinations! What did he go to the VA saying the day before they found him dead and cold in a bathroom on the 8th floor? He said he was hearing voices. Hallucinating!!! Maybe those people should be prescribed the same medications that Joseph was. Would any of you be willing to take even one of those medications? I sure wouldn't!!

Due to the side effects, Joseph chained himself to the beam in the ceiling to make sure that he didn't sleep walk! He literally chained himself with a master lock and chain around his ankle so that he would not wake up hallucinating and harm someone. He had my mom keep the key to the lock and asked her to do a mental evaluation of him before she was allowed to unlock him.

My brother was a prisoner in his own body. Joseph couldn't shower regularly because the pain of his knees trying to step into the tub was too much to bear. He couldn't stand up without falling over or holding on to something for support. Not long before he died, my son who had just turned 12 watched his Uncle Joseph fall down the stairs of the porch.

My brother, who was so selfless and compassionate to others, was dying in front of me and I kept trying to get him to stop taking those meds!

He was not my brother any more; my brother was hiding in there somewhere trying to get help! He told me his doctors were concerned about the guns in the house, the guns weren't the danger though. Joseph was taught to fight as an Army Ranger. He didn't need a gun to harm someone. He was taught to protect and serve his country and to take out the enemy with any force needed. He did not commit suicide because he felt sorry for himself; he committed suicide to protect others from the voices in his head and hallucinations telling him to hurt others.

I was told that Joseph had been given information about homeless shelters. I can assure you that MY brother would have never been homeless!!! Shame on the American people who allow Veterans to become homeless. The words **"Homeless" and "Veteran" should not be used together!** How can we as Americans sit back and look down our noses at men and women who fight for our freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and all our many other freedoms? I do believe that OUR Veterans should be treated with more respect than I have seen. Go to a VA without your suit on and take a look around. I dare you! You will see a lot of men and women who served the same country that you and I serve in our own ways. They fought in one way or another for our freedoms. They are being neglected, forgotten, and shamed by the actions of our American people.

I don't believe my brother was perfect, nor do I believe any other person on this planet is. I do believe when someone says they have pain and they have the sounds of his knees, they should be taken more seriously. I don't know everything that happened with Joseph at the VA because I am not him. I can only go on the information he provided and that I witnessed first hand.

Nothing I say or do can bring Joseph back and I wouldn't dare bring him back to be mistreated again. I know he is with God! I know he is redeemed!

The following is a letter that I retyped word for word that Joseph wrote May 15, 1992 to Congressman Newt Gingrich. I think Joseph said it best himself. Please read below.

P.F.C. Petit
(Residence Georgia 30253)
13906 Ft. Campbell Blvd, Apt 2
Oak Grove, KY 42262

Congressman Newt Gingrich
P.O. Box 848
Griffin, GA 30224

Dear Congressman Gingrich:

I am Private First Class Joseph C. Petit, 253-98-3134. I enlisted in the Active Duty Army November 26, 1990, as an Infantryman and was scheduled to attend Airborne Training and Ranger Indoctrination Training before being assigned to a Ranger Battalion. I enlisted for four years and sixteen weeks.

I have documentation proving that I passed all of my physical flawlessly at the Atlanta Military Enlistment Processing Station.

In March of 1991, I was attending Airborne Training when I injured both my knees performing parachute landing falls. The orthopedic surgeon presently overseeing my case is Dr. Greer Busbee. Dr. Busbee did not examine me until more than six months after my injury. Dr. Busbee has formed the incorrect opinion that this may have existed prior to service. Dr. Busbee believes this is a temporary condition even after 14 months without any improvement. Dr. Busbee will not allow me a second opinion, corrective surgery, arthroscopy, arthrograms, or magnetic resonance imaging.

Presently a Formal Physical Evaluation Board has found me physically unfit for military duties and recommends a combined rating of 10% and that my disposition be: "Separation with severance pay if otherwise qualified." The Physical Evaluation Board says this condition is permanent. My legal representative told me that entitled me to approximately 4 months pay and Veterans Administration benefits. My written rebuttal must be received by the Physical Evaluation Board no later than 8:00 a.m., May 25, 1992, Central Time Zone.

The Physical Evaluation Board decision was based primarily on the statements of Dr. Greer Busbee. I believe Dr. Busbee's assessment of my injuries are incomplete at best.

I fully realize the risk of surgery. I want my knees repaired if possible or replaced with artificial knees. If
Congressman Newt Gingrich
Page 2
May 15, 1992

possible, I would like to continue service in the Army. I still aspire to be an Airborne Ranger. If I am discharged without repair, I request financial compensation until they can be repaired because walking even slowly causes severe pain, popping, grinding and a feeling of joint separating.

Presently, I cannot perform any of the jobs that I have experience in. Any help would be greatly appreciated by my wife and I.

Sincerely,

Private First Class
Joseph C. Petit

P>F>C> Petit: Home: (502) 439-3675

	Work:	(502) 798-2753
P.E.B.		(512) 221-1524
Dr. Busbee		
Orthopedic Clinic		(502) 798-8426
Hospital Information		(502) 789-8400

Please read the below text messages between Joseph Petit and his sister Brandie Petit. Please understand the misspelled words were not normal for Joseph. He used very good grammar, spelling, and punctuation regularly.

Sept 19, 2012 @ 6:15 PM

Joseph sent Brandie a text stating "Home safely ; medication increased because of sounds heard lately."

Brandie's response "Thank you for letting me know. I love you."

Sept 27, 2012 @ 6:33 PM

Joseph sent Brandie a text stating "Hello, I made it home alive today. Anyway, I may have hallucinated last night ; or now ? Or have these occurrences not happened yet ; is one of us hallucinating the other ? Is now really now? Does reality exist? Can exist possibly exist without reality? My meds.... Why yes they did change something.. Why do you ask???"

Brandie's response "I really wish you would get off all medications, you were much more normal before them. I love you!!!!"

Oct 12, 2012 @ 9:00 AM

Joseph sent Brandie a text stating "I am at the VA for the fourth day this week. Monday was a federal holiday. I did not understand until maybe

Wednesday ; I am exhausted. Outpatient. All patients are limited in treatment until outpatient stabilized status. I am still physically reacting to hallucinations. Dr. Will and I have an appointment today. She is one of my favorite doctors. She is my psychiatrist. **I continue to chain myself to the ceiling** ; somehow that seems to limit sleep walking. If I understand correctly my psychologist student has the credentials to diagnose and correct my files ; under the supervision of another doctor. Next appointment with him is Tuesday. GOD Bless You and Yours.

Brandie's response "God Bless You!!!"

Oct 22, 2012 @ 6:00 PM

Joseph sent Brandie texts stating "I have properly attended all four appointments at the Stockbridge VA Clinic beginning June 2011. Today is the first time that I remained an outpatient. My new doctor set the referrals I requested in writing. A few hours later, she called to say that my case is too complicated for the clinic. I am being transferred to VAMC Decatur. There is less chance of falling through the cracks in the system at this point. Perhaps Wednesday or Thursday I will know more."

Brandie's response "Ok"

Oct 23, 2012 @ 8:51 PM

Brandie sent Joseph a text stating, "I love you"

Joseph did not respond

Oct 24, 2012 @ 4:18 PM

Joseph sent Brandie texts that were very scrambled to say the least.

Joseph texted "I am home again."

Brandie's response "Good!!!!"

Joseph texted "Anxiety meds could be stronger."

Brandie's response "Give it to God!!! He helps me with anxiety all the time when people piss me off"

Joseph texted "This time when I heard the phone I did not jump."

Brandie's response "Good"

Joseph texted "I jumped again. i jump about half the time that this phone makes sounds. Even when I am expecting it. Probably looks hilarious."

My response was "Lol. Mine is broken so it doesn't make any noise at all"

Later this same day **@ 9:05 PM** Joseph texted "Trying to think ; not productive at this point."

Brandie's response "I'm sorry. Maybe you should not try to be as intelligent while on your meds. We all know you are VERY smart, no need to try to prove it all the time. We all love you just the way you are."

Joseph's response "Being mentally disabled slows progress, hallucinations keep life interesting. They gather groups of us together ; when someone pushes button 5 on the elevator, people seem to back away slowly ? There is talk of a sleep study for me, and neurology. Maybe progress will produce complete diagnosis."

Brandie did not respond

Nov 1, 2012 @ 7:03 PM

Joseph sent Brandie texts stating "I made it home safely."

Brandie's response "Good!!!! I'm having a rough week"

Nov 9, 2012 @ 1:03 PM

Brandie sent Joseph a text stating "I love you!!!! I'm sorry I have been busy trying to adjust back to work and all the chores that come along with your new niece Lani Belle."

Joseph never responded. My mom called me within minutes and told me they had found Joseph. Thank God I know my brother was saved and I will see him again one day!

The following letter is from Joseph's longest and best friend of 34 years (Joseph was only 42 and made friends for life). My mom, Sandra Petit, requested his friend Mike to write his own recollection of the events that led up to Joseph's death.

When Joseph got out of the army he was always complaining about his knees hurting & said that the army wouldn't help him or fix them for him, it was hurting him all of the time but he would do whatever he wanted to do despite the pain, he was able to do his everyday activities so he had a sour taste in his mouth towards the government for not helping one of their own that was injured! He spent countless hours & many years trying to get help with " no results" but he kept trying. He told me of a time he went to the V.A. in Atlanta Ga. looking for some help & told them he was in terrible pain & that he needed help & the V.A. forcefully removed him from the premises when all he was doing was looking for help! He kept trying to get help & persistence paid off the V.A. finally agreed to help him, this meant a great deal to Joseph as he had been trying to get help for almost two decades. He was very happy to have the V.A look @ his knees after all this

time. At this time in his life he could function just as well as anybody could it was just with a great deal of pain BUT HE COULD FUNCTION!! which means driving ,walking, limited running, exercise etc. the V.A. set him an appointment & sent him home with some medications for his head & said nothing is wrong with his knees to the point @ which he described & told him that it was Post Traumatic Stress Disorder & that the pain was all in his head & if he took these medications & do specific exercises that his knees would quit hurting & he said that he's willing to try anything to see if it would ease up the pain but it never helped him. They made several appointments for him & they noticed (The V.A.) that he was not functioning like he usually did & lock him up in the cereal ward as he called it with all the nuts, fruits, & flakes & told me they were going to give him medicine for psychotic people that their attention is no longer on his knees but on his head & the V.A. got him in touch with a doctor that specializes in this field he said the gave him some papers saying in his words "that he was a nut" but he told me he would have to go along with them or they would not try to help him so he did what he was asked to do. He took the medicine as prescribed and just about every time he went to a appointment they would lock him up for being unstable or suicidal & give him more drugs & sent him home, drugs for his head & not his knees, I think he told me that the V.A. has prescribed him 27 different medications he had so much medication that he was unable to do any of the things that he could do prior to going to the V.A. such as driving, walking without assistance, it got hard for him to hold a conversation at times, he told the V.A. that he was scared that he was going to hurt someone or himself that he needed to be locked up till they fixed this medication problem that they created; they changed his meds & sent him home. He told me that he told them he had thought about killing himself but they ignored him so he went to bathroom & put a zip tie around his neck & someone walked in & found him in the floor & he was unconscious. The V.A. changed some meds & sent him home after a week or so. His next few appointments he told them that it wasn't helping him they needed to lock him up before he hurts someone or himself they still didn't listen to him and just kept telling him to go home its all in your head; he told them it was to the point where he would literally chain himself in his room & give his mom the keys to unlock him the next morning; that he needed to be locked away till they could get him on some medication that wouldn't give him these thoughts, they just ignored what he was saying after practically begging them to do something about this; "that his thinking wasn't clear, please lock him up he didn't want to hurt anyone", but they just turned him away & said its all in your head go home. This happened several

times, he had several appointments after that for his mental state of mind. They all ended the same way, go home it's in your head. The next appointment Joseph didn't come home; they found him several, several hours later in the bathroom where he committed suicide! This could have been avoided! He was a good soldier

A good man
A good son
& A good friend!!

Mike

Joseph's favorite song at the time of his death was "Redeemed" by Big Daddy Weave, probably because it referenced the chains and how they were gone. I have attached the words for your reference.

"Redeemed"

Seems like all I could see was the struggle
Haunted by ghosts that lived in my past
Bound up in shackles of all my failures
Wondering how long is this gonna last
Then You look at this prisoner and say to me "son
Stop fighting a fight it's already been won"

I am redeemed, You set me free
So I'll shake off these heavy chains
Wipe away every stain, now I'm not who I used to be
I am redeemed, I'm redeemed

All my life I have been called unworthy
Named by the voice of my shame and regret
But when I hear You whisper, "Child lift up your head"
I remember, oh God, You're not done with me yet

I am redeemed, You set me free
So I'll shake off these heavy chains
Wipe away every stain, now I'm not who I used to be

Because I don't have to be the old man inside of me
'Cause his day is long dead and gone
Because I've got a new name, a new life, I'm not the same
And a hope that will carry me home

I am redeemed, You set me free
So I'll shake off these heavy chains
Wipe away every stain, 'cause I'm not who I used to be

I am redeemed, You set me free
So I'll shake off these heavy chains
Wipe away every stain, yeah, I'm not who I used to be
Oh, God, I'm not who I used to be
Jesus, I'm not who I used to be
'Cause I am redeemed

Thank God, redeemed